

# Meeting in the middle: community voices and complex choices

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The disaster risk and resilience landscape is constantly evolving, and so too are the approaches we take in policy and practice. Despite an extended period of disruption and social distancing, many lessons have been learnt over the past 12 months regarding resilience, adaptability and risk reduction.

These learnings will be shared over 2 major events hosted by AIDR this August; the Australian Disaster Resilience Conference and the National Recovery Forum.

The title of this year's conference is *Meeting in the middle: community voices and complex choices*.

Recent times have brought the reality of intersecting crises and cascading societal consequences into focus. As Australia moved from drought into a bushfire crisis and a pandemic, the systemic risk and vulnerability present in the systems that support our society to function were laid bare. What this also brought to the forefront was human behaviour that demonstrates what we truly value and choices made in consideration of the future we seek to protect.

It is acknowledged that meaningful community engagement and community-led approaches are essential to effectively support disaster resilience. So too are systems, frameworks and enabling environments created through well-considered policy and coordination. We have sought to make disaster risk reduction and resilience everyone's business, all with a role to play. And yet, an inherent tension in striking the right balance between top-down and bottom-up approaches to resilience remains. What approaches and mindset do we need to meet in the middle?

Important choices will continue to be made about how we reduce risk, prepare, respond and recover. How do we ensure the 'community' is included in community-led? How do we tackle systemic risks influencing communities that arise from public policy legacies and past decisions?

Supported by industry partner Resilience NSW, the conference will bring together people from across Australia to discuss and connect with peers across 2 concurrent conference streams.

## Improving future recovery

In Australia, we are guided by the national recovery principles of understanding context, recognising complexity, adopting community-led approaches, coordinating activities, communicating effectively and recognising and building capacity.

The bushfires of 2019–20 set in motion a recovery effort of immense scale and a surge of people supporting the complex and challenging work of supporting communities to recover. As we move further down the path of recovery, there is value in exchanging experiences and lessons, and reenergise for the steps ahead.

The National Recovery Forum will attract people involved in disaster recovery from who will be able to connect, share knowledge, ideas and good practice for communities to recover from disasters and build resilience.

Reflections will be shared from recovery practitioners and community members on different approaches to recovery, what has been most effective and why.

The Australian Disaster Resilience Conference will be held at the International Convention Centre in Sydney on 18–19 August 2021. Find out more at the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience website: [www.aidr.org.au/adrc](http://www.aidr.org.au/adrc).

For more information about the National Recovery Forum, visit: [www.aidr.org.au/recoveryforum](http://www.aidr.org.au/recoveryforum).